

# Green Book of Meditations Volume Two: Celtic, Native American, African, Hindu & Greek Writings

I assembled this volume during one of my more nativist phases. There is a good reason that the Founders of the RDNA originally chose a Celtic flavor to their group, because Celtic literature is full of beautiful observations of Nature, as did the Native Americans, Africans, Hindus and Greeks. Each of the other groups have had to deal with the approach of Westernization and the destruction of traditional ways. However, I feel that these selections may provide useful solitary pondering and some may even make good readings at various Druidic services, campfires and tea parties. The translations of the works found in the Green Book Volume Two, with few exceptions, originally from old books and are probably safely past the copyright limit, so feel free to share.

It was originally titled "Celtic and English Writings" and released in 1993, during a flurry of activity when I released new printings of two volumes of Green Books, the Book of the African Jedi Knight, Book 2 of Poetry, The Dead Lake Scrolls, The Dead Bay Scrolls and a new edition of The Druid Chronicles. I was a bit overly busy.

The original edition of the Green Book of Meditations, volume two had quite a different content than this edition, edited for ARDA. The English Poetry section is the same, but the Irish and Welsh Poetry section was rearranged in order to reduce space. I removed the 7 translations by Matthews and Nichol's to avoid copyright problems here. Similarly I have removed the 10 Scottish Gaelic Poetry translations out of respect for those authors. I'll put them into a separate file on the web-site for people to observe. I've also removed a Rosicrucian piece and some Grateful Dead song lyrics. Less than a third of the original volume remains in this edition.

This editing was also done because I felt that I had done too heavy a focus on Celtic writings than is good for the destiny of the Reform. I feel that people should be wide ranging in their studies, so I have replaced those removed sections with writings from other native wisdom traditions. I feel the final product is more intriguing and balanced.

Please Learn and Enjoy,

Michael Scharding  
Grand Patriarch of the Ancient Order of Bambi

Big River Grove, Saint Cloud Minnesota  
Day 73 of Earrach, Year XXXIII of the Reform  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Introductory Materials - 21

Introduction  
Table of Contents

## English Poetry - 23

Stopping by the Woods  
Jabberwocky

## Welsh and Irish Poetry - 23

The Waterfall  
Sadness in Spring  
Rain Outside  
Winter and Warfare  
Mountain Snow  
Bright Trees  
The Spoils of Annwn  
Cad Goddeau  
Leadership  
Sunshine Through My Window  
Further Readings

## Thirteen Fold Mysteries - 29

Nichol's 13  
Williams' 13  
Graves' 13  
Another 13

## The Voyage of Bran - 31

## Proverbs of the Modern Gaels -34

Advice  
Attitudes  
Behavior  
Company  
Contentment  
Death  
Education & Experience  
Fate  
Fighting  
Foolishness  
God & Heaven  
Greed  
Hope  
Humor  
Hypocrisy & Integrity  
Love  
Nature  
Politics  
Pride  
Tact & Talk  
Wisdom  
Work

## Wisdom of the Native Americans - 37

Born Natural  
Sacred Earth  
Silent Vigils  
Simple Truth  
Courtesy  
Conversation  
Persistence  
Crowned Leadership  
Pine Tree Chiefs  
Not By Bread Alone  
Show Me  
Free Wisdom  
Quarreling about God  
God Made Me This Way  
Pausing  
Please Listen  
The Views of Two Men  
Misfortune  
Pretty Pebbles  
The Power of Paper  
Frantic Fools  
Cities  
The White Man's Dreams

## The Vigil - 41

## Wisdom of the Africans - 42

Proverbs on Wisdom  
Proverbs on Truth and Falsehood  
Proverbs on Human Conduct  
Proverbs on Virtue  
Proverbs on Cooperation and Contentment  
Proverbs on Opportunity  
Proverbs on Human Beings  
Proverbs on Nature  
Proverbs on Leadership

## More Wisdom of the African World - 43

## Wisdom of the Hindus and Greeks - 46

Frogs Desiring a King  
The Bat, the Birds and the Beasts  
the Dog and the Wolf  
The Fox and the Grapes  
The Lion and the Statue  
The Man and His Wives  
The Two Crabs  
Hercules and the Waggoner  
The Man and the Wooden God  
The Miser  
The Bundle of Sticks  
The Buffoon and the Countryman  
The Serpent and the File

# English Poetry

## Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening

by **Robert Frost**

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep.  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

## JABBERWOCKY

by **Lewis Carroll**

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gymbale in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves;  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,  
The jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whirring through the tulgey wood,  
And bumbled as it came!

One, two One, two And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

"-And hast thou slain the jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day Calooh! Callay!-"  
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slimy toves  
Did gyre and gamble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

# Irish & Welsh Poetry

Most of the "Druidic" material used by modern Druid groups has survived in the form of obscure poetry. Many groups go to great lengths to "read into" many of these poems for Druidical material, "hidden" by the Bards during the persecutions. Since some of you will "progress" on to more "serious" Druid groups, it is good to be familiar with some of the more "stressed" reading material.

Only the English Translations have been provided. In the original, these poems had marvelous rhymes, meters and clever poetic devices that a literal translation cannot hope to convey. Use the symbology and nature imagery to open your mind. Please don't try to rush through these poems, many are of interminable length and will just bog you down. Skip the longer ones when you are just perusing, that way you'll enjoy them more when you have time.

## The Waterfall

By **Dafydd y Coed**

Rough, bold, cold Rhayadr, with tiny tresses,  
Piddling pennyworths,  
Blare, blow, blaze, soft arses' snare,  
Sewer to Hell's hollow coombe.

Harsh foul-smelling hollow, threatening harm,  
Dark candleless bedlam,  
Captive waterfall, uncurbed,  
Hard-pressing repress, sly slut.

Slyness bound in dark banks, foul dump of dregs,  
Where my slaughter was sought,  
Sad tale, may there come to town  
Fierce flame through vile Wye's Rhayadr.

Hateful is filthy Rhayadr,  
I hate its foul sow-like lake,  
Hateful, haughty, shit-hole's stink,  
Hounds' hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate,  
Hateful, stagless, my grievance,  
Thick-thwacking furrow for churls!

## Sadness in Spring

From The Earliest Welsh Poetry, pg. 99

Springtime, loveliest season,  
Noisy the birds, new the shoots,  
Ploughs in furrow, oxen yoked,  
Green the sea, fields are dappled.

When cuckoos sing on comely tree-tops,  
The greater is my sadness,  
Smoke bitter, loss of sleep plain,  
Because my kinsmen are gone.

In mount, in meadow, in ocean isles,  
in each way one may take,  
From Christ there is no seclusion.

## Rain Outside

From The Earliest Welsh Poetry, pg. 99

Rain outside, drenches bracken;  
Sea shingle white, fringe of foam;  
Fair candle, man's discretion.

Rain outside, need for refuge;  
Furze yellowed, hogweed withered;  
Lord God, why made you a coward?

Rain outside, drenches my hair;  
The feeble plaintive, slope steep;  
Ocean pallid, brine salty.

Rain outside, drenches the deep;  
Whistle of wind over reed-tips;  
Widowed each feat, talent wanting.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following poems use a Welsh (and Irish) tradition of writing in three line poems called Triads. The use of triplets makes it more powerful.

## Winter and Warfare

From The Earliest Welsh Poetry, pg. 96

Wind piercing, her bare, hard to find shelter;  
Ford turns foul, lake freezes.  
A man could stand on a stalk.

Wave on wave cloaks countryside;  
Shrill the shrieks from the peaks of the mountain;  
One can scarce stand outside.

Cold the lake-bed from winter's blast;  
Dried reeds, stalks broken;  
Angry wind, woods stripped naked.

Cold bed of fish beneath a screen of ice;  
Stag lean, stalks bearded;  
Short evening, trees bent over.

Snow is falling, white the soil.  
Soldiers go not campaigning.  
Cold lakes, their colour sunless.

Snow is falling, white hoar-frost.  
Shield idle on an old shoulder.  
Wind intense, shoots are frozen.

Snow is falling upon the ice.  
Wind is sweeping thick tree-tops.  
Shield bold on a brave shoulder.

Snow is falling, cloaks the valley.  
Soldiers hasten to battle.  
I go not, a wound stays me.

Snow is falling on the slope.  
Stallion confined; lean cattle.  
No summer day is today.

Snow is falling, white the mountain's edge.  
Ship's mast bare at sea.

A coward conceives many schemes.

Gold rims round horns, horns round bards.  
Roads frozen, air gleaming bright;  
Brief twilight, tree-tops bowed down.

Bees in honeycombs, faint cry of birds.  
Day bleak,  
White-mantled hill-ridge, red dawn.

Bees in refuge, cold lid on the ford,  
Frozen when ice forms.  
None may escape death's coming.

Bees in prison, green-hued ocean.  
Stalks dried out, hillside hard.  
Frigid, bitter, the world today.

Bees in shelter from winter's wetness.  
Pale honey, hogweed hollow.  
Foul hold on a man, cowardice.

Long night, bare heath, brown hillside,  
Grey shore, gulls in a clamour,  
Rough seas: it will rain today.

Dry wind, wet road, brawling water-ways,  
Cold corpses, lean stag,  
River in flood: it will clear.

Storm on the mountain, rivers embroiled,  
Floors of houses flooded:  
To one's sight, the world is a sea.

You're not a schoolman, you're not a greybeard,  
You'll not answer a crisis:  
Ah, Cyndilig, if you'd been a woman!

Stag crouches curled in the coombe's nook.  
Ice crumbles, countryside bare.  
The brave may survive many battles.

Bankside crumbles beneath the scrawny stag's hoof  
High-pitched the wind, screeching.  
One can scarcely stand outside.

Winter's first day, darkened surface of heather.  
Spuming the sea-wave.  
Brief day: let your counsel be done.

With shield for shelter and stallion's spirit  
And men, fearless, peerless,  
Fine the night for routing foes.

Swift the wind, stripped the woods.  
Hollow stalks, hardy stag.  
Stern Pelis, what land is this?

Though high as the tawny horse were the snow,  
The dark would not make me grieve.  
I would lead a band to Bryn Tyddwl.

With high seas beating the embankment and ford,  
Snows falls on the hillside,  
Pelis, how can you lead us?

Not a worry for me in Britain tonight

Raiding Nuchein's lord's lands  
On white steed, Owain leading.

Before you were bearing arms and buckler,  
Fierce bulwark in battle,  
Pelis, what region reared you?

The man God releases from too strait a prison,  
Red lance of a leader,  
owain of Rheged reared me.

Though a ruler's gone to Iwerydd's ford,  
From the band, do not flee!  
After mead, do not seek disgrace.

The morning of grey daybreak,  
When Mwing Mawr Drefydd was charged,  
Mechydd's steeds were not pampered.

Drink does not make me merry,  
What with the tales and my thoughts,  
Mechydd, branches your cover.

They encountered at Cafall  
A bloody carcass, despised.  
Rhun's clash with another hero.

Because the spearmen of Mwing slew Mechydd,  
Bold lad who knows it not,  
Lord of heaven, you've given me anguish.

Men in combat, ford frozen,  
Wave frigid, ocean's breast grey:  
These may summon to battle.

Mechydd ap Llywarch, dauntless nobleman,  
Comely, swan-coloured cloak,  
The first to bridle his steed.

## Mountain Snow

The Earliest Welsh Poetry, pg. 100

Mountain snow, each region white;  
Common the raven calling;  
No good comes of too much slumber.

Mountain snow, deep dingle white;  
Woods bend before wind's onslaught;  
Many couples are in love  
And never come together.

Mountain snow, wind scatters it;  
Moonlight far-spread, leaves pale;  
Rare the rogue who claims no rights.

Mountain snow, stag nimble;  
Common to Britain, proud princes;  
A stranger requires cunning.

Mountain snow, stag in rut;  
Ducks on the lake, ocean white;  
Slow the old, soon overtaken.

Mountain snow, stag bending;  
The heart laughs for one loved;  
Though a tale be told of me,

I know shame wherever it be.

Mountain snow, shingle white grit;  
Fish in ford, shelter in cave;  
Who acts harshly is hated.

Mountain snow, stag in flight;  
Common for a lord, gleaming blade,  
And mounting a saddle-bow,  
And dismounting, anger well-armed.

Mountain snow, stag hunched-up;  
Many have muttered, truly,  
This is not like a summer day.

Mountain snow, stag hunted;  
Whistle of wind over tower eaves;  
Burdensome, Man, is sin.

Mountain snow, stag bounding;  
Whistle of wind over high white wall;  
Common, a quiet beauty.

Mountain snow, stag on sea-strand;  
An old man knows his youth lost;  
A foul face keeps a man down.

Mountain snow, stag in grove;  
Raven dark-black, roebuck swift;  
One free and well, strange he should groan.

Mountain snow, stag in rushes;  
Marshes freezing, mead in cask;  
Common for the crippled to groan.

Mountain snow, tower's breast studded;  
The beast searches for shelter;  
Pity her who has a bad man.

Mountain snow, crag's breast studded;  
Reeds withered, herd shunning water;  
Pity him who has a bad wife.

Mountain snow, stag in gully;  
Bees are sleeping well-sheltered;  
A long night suits a robber.

Mountain snow 'liverwort in river;  
Wed unwilling to trouble,  
The sluggard seeks no swift revenge.

Mountain snow, fish in lake;  
Falcon proud, prince in splendour;  
One who has all does not groan.

Mountain snow, lords' front rank red;  
Lances angry, abundant;  
Ah god, for my brother's anguish!!

## Bright Trees

(**Taliesin by Williams**)

Bright are the ash-tops; tall and white will they be  
When they grow in the upper part of the dingle;  
The languid heart, longing is her complaint...

Bright are the willow-tops; playful the fish  
In the lake; the wind whistles over the tops of the branches;  
Nature is superior to learning.

Bright the tops of the furze; have confidence  
In the wise; and to the universe be repulsive;  
Except God, there is none that divines.

Bright are the tops of the clover; the timid have no heart;  
jealous ones weary themselves out;  
Usual is care upon the weak.

Bright the tops of the reed-grass; furious is the jealous,  
And he can hardly be satisfied;  
It is the act of the wise to love with sincerity.

Bright the tops of the oat; bitter the ash branches;  
Sweet the cow-parsnip, the wave keeps laughing;  
The cheek will not conceal the anguish of the heart.

Bright the tops of the dogrose; hardship has no formality;  
Let everyone preserve his purity of life.  
The greatest blemish is ill manners.

Bright the tops of the broom; let the lover make assignations;  
Very yellow are the clustered branches;  
Shallow ford; the contented enjoy sleep.

Bright the tops of the apple tree; circumspect is  
Every prudent one, a chider of another;  
And after loving, indiscretion leaving it.

Bright the hazel-tops by the hill of Digoll;  
Unafflicted will be every neglected one;  
It is an act of the mighty to keep a treaty.

Bright the tops of reeds; it is usual for the sluggish  
To be heavy, the youth to be learners;  
None but the foolish will break the faith.

Bright the tops of the lily; let every bold one be a servitor;  
The word of a family will prevail;  
Usual with the faithless, a broken word.

Bright the tops of the heath; usual is miscarriage  
To the timid; water will be intrusive along the shore;  
Usual with the faithful, an unbroken word.

Bright the tops of rushes; cows are profitable,  
Running are my tears this day;  
No comfort is there for the miserable.

Bright the tops of fern, yellow  
The charlock; how reproachless are the blind;  
How apt to run about are youngsters!

Bright the tops of the service-tree; accustomed to care  
Is the aged one, and bees to the wilds;  
Except God, there is no avenger

Bright the tops of the oak; incessant is the tempest-  
The bees are high; brittle the dry brushwood;  
Usual for the wanton is excessive laughter.

Bright the tops of the grove; constantly the trees  
And the oak leaves are failing;  
Happy is he who sees the one he loves.

Bright the tops of the oaks; coldly purls the stream;  
Let the cattle be fetched to the birch-enclosed area;  
Abruptly goes the arrow of the haughty to give pain.

Bright the tops of the hard holly; let gold be shared;  
When all fall asleep on the rampart,  
God will not sleep when he gives deliverance.

Bright the tops of the willows; inherently bold  
Will the war-horse be in the long day, when leaves abound;  
Those with mutual friends will not hate each other.

Bright the tops of the rushes; prickly will they be  
When spread under the pillow;  
The wanton mind will be ever haughty.

Bright the tops of the hawthorn; confident the steed;  
It is usual for a lover to pursue;  
May the diligent messenger do good.

Bright the tops of the cresses; warlike the steed;  
Trees are fair ornaments for the ground;  
Joyful the soul with what it loves.

Bright is the top of the bush; valuable the steed;  
It is good to have discretion with strength;  
Let the unskillful be made powerless.

Bright are the tops of the brakes; gay the plumage  
Of birds; the long day is the gift of the light;  
Mercifully has the beneficent God made them.

Bright the tops of the meadow-sweet; and music  
In the grove; bold the wind, the trees shake;  
Interceding with the obdurate will not avail.

Bright the tops of the elder-trees; bold is the solitary singer;  
Accustomed is the violent to oppress;  
Woe to him who takes a reward from the hand.

## The Spoils of Annwn

*Earliest Welsh Poetry*, pg. 213 The following poem, the Spoils of Annwyn, refers to the adventures of the Mabinogian hero, Pwyll, who visits the land of the Dead (Annwn)

Praise to the Lord, Supreme Ruler of the high region,  
Who hath extended his dominion to the shores of the world.  
Complete was the prison of Gwair in Caer Sidi;  
Through the permission of Pwyll and Pryderi,  
No one before him went to it.  
A heavy blue chain firmly held the youth;  
And for the spoils of Annwn gloomily he sings,  
And till doom shall continue his lay. Thrice the fullness of  
Prydwn we went into it.  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Sidi.

Am I not a candidate for fame to be heard in the song,  
In Caer Pedryvan four times revolving  
The first word from the cauldron, when was it spoken?  
By the breath of nine damsels gently warmed.  
Is it not the cauldron of the Chief of Annwn which is social?

With a ridge round its edge of pearls,  
It will not boil the food of a coward nor of one excommunicated.  
A sword bright flashing to him will be brought,  
And left in the hand of Llyminawg.  
And before the door of the porch of hell a lantern is burning.  
And when we went with Arthur in his splendid labours,  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Vendiuid.

Am I not a candidate for fame, to be heard in song ?  
In Caer Pedryfan, the island of Pybyrdor,  
Twilight and darkness meet together.  
Bright wine was their drink in their assembly.  
Thrice the burden of Prydwen we went on the sea.  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Rigor.

I will not allow great merit to the directors of learning.  
Beyond Caer Wydr they have not beheld the prowess of Arthur.  
Three score hundred men were placed upon the wall;  
It was difficult to converse with the sentinel.  
Thrice the fullness of Prydwen we went with Arthur.  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Golur.

I will not allow merit to the multitude trailing on the circuit  
They know not on what day or who caused it,  
Nor what hour in the splendid day Cwy was born,  
Nor who prevented him from going to the vales of Deowy.  
They know not the brindled ox, with this thick headband,  
And seven score knobs in his collar.  
And when we went with Arthur of mournful memory,  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Vandwy.

## Cad Goddeu

### "Battle of the Trees"

by Taliesin, found in John Matthews books *Taliesin*, pg. 297, which I highly recommend. Take this piece for instance. The next piece is extremely overused by Celtophiles because of its marvelous description of fighting trees and plants. Many think this refers to the Ogham alphabet, which represents trees by their first letter in the Irish language. Therefore, many believe this song contains hidden Druidic knowledge. I think so too, but it also is great for fighting imagery.

"Taliesin" was a Welsh bard (or even an Irish one writing Welsh) of the 5th-8th century who is accredited with writing many of the earliest surviving poems in the Welsh language. He shows up in the Mabinogian with the other gods of the Welsh and may act as the Welsh "Muse."

I have been in many shapes  
Before I assumed a constant form:  
I have been a narrow sword,  
A drop in the air,  
A shining bright star,  
A letter among words  
In the book of origins.  
I have been lantern light  
For a year and a day,  
I have been a bridge  
Spanning three score rivers.  
I have flown as an eagle,  
Been a coracle on the sea,  
I have been a drop in a shower,  
A sword in a hand,  
A shield in battle,  
A string in a harp.  
Nine years in enchantment,  
In water, in foam,  
I have absorbed fire,  
I have been a trout in a covert,

There is nothing of which  
I have not been part.

I fought, though small,  
At the battle of Goddeu Brig.  
With Prydain's ruler,  
With his rich-laden fleet.  
Unwise bards pretend  
A terrible beast  
With a hundred heads  
The battle was contested  
At the root of its tongue,  
At the back of its skull.  
The hundred-clawed black toad,  
The crested, speckled snake  
Are the soul's punishment,  
A torment to the flesh.

I was at Caer Nefenhir,  
Where grass and trees came swiftly  
Wayfarers perceived them,  
Warriors stood astonished,  
At the might of the Britons,  
Shown forth by Gwydion.  
Men called upon the Christ,  
On the Saints as well,  
To deliver them swiftly

From terrible rage.  
Answer they got  
In elemental language:  
Rush, ye chiefs of the Wood  
With the princes in your thousands,  
To hinder the hosts of the enemy.  
The trees were enchanted  
For work of destruction,  
The battle was joined  
with the music of harps.  
In the tumult many fell,  
But brought forth new heroes ..  
[four lines omitted].

The Alders, first in line,  
Thrust forward in time.  
The Willows and Mountain Ash  
Were late to the array.  
The Blackthorns, full of spines,  
And their mate, the Mediar  
Cut down all opposition.  
The Rose marched along  
Against a hero throng.  
The Raspberry was decreed  
To serve as useful food,  
For the sustenance of life  
Not to carry on the strife.  
The Wild Rose and the Woodbine  
With the Ivy intertwined  
How the Poplar trembled,  
And the Cherry dared.  
The Birch, all ambition,  
Was tardily arrayed;  
Not from any diffidence, but  
Because of its magnificence  
The Labumum set its heart  
On beauty not bravery.  
The Yew was to the fore,  
At the seat of war.  
The Ash was most exalted  
Before the sovereign powers.  
The Elm, despite vast numbers,  
Swerved not half a foot,  
But fell upon the centre,  
On the wings, and on the rear.  
The Hazel was esteemed,  
By its number in the quiver.  
Hail, blessed Cornell,  
Bull of battle, King of all.  
By the channels of the sea,  
The Beech did prosperously.  
The Holly livid grew,  
And manly acts it knew.  
The White Thorn checked all  
its venom scored the palm.  
The Vines, which roofed us,  
Were cut down in battle  
And their clusters plundered.  
The Broom, before the rage of war  
In the ditch lay broken.  
The Gorse was never prized;  
Thus it was vulgarized  
Before the swift oak-darts  
Heaven and earth did quake.  
The Chestnut suffered shame  
At the power of the Yew.  
Forest, that caused obstruction,

The multitude was enchanted,  
At the Battle of Goddeu Brig. [12 lines omitted]

Not of mother nor of father was my creation.  
I was made from the nine fold elements  
From fruit trees, from paradisiacal fruit,  
From primroses and hill-flowers,  
From the blossom of trees and bushes.  
From the roots of the earth was I made,  
From the broom and the nettle,  
From the water of the ninth wave.  
Math enchanted me before I was made immortal,  
Gwydion created me with his magic wand.  
From Emrys and Euryon, from Mabon and Modron,  
From five fifties of magicians like Math was I made  
Made by the master in his highest ecstasy  
By the wisest of druids was I made before the world began,  
And I know the star-knowledge from the beginning of Time.

Bards are accustomed to praises.  
I can frame what no tongue utters.  
I slept in purple,  
I was in the enclosure  
With Dylan Eil Mor,  
I was a cloak between lords,  
Two spears in the hand of the mighty,  
When the torrent fell  
From the height of heaven.  
I know four hundred songs  
Which bards both older and younger cannot sing  
Nine hundred more, unknown to any other.  
I will sing concerning the sword  
Which was red with blood.  
I will sing the boar-slaying,  
Its appearance, and its vanishing  
Of the knowledge it contained.  
I have knowledge of splendid starlight,  
The number of ruling stars  
Scattering rays of fire  
Above the world.

I have been a snake enchanted on a hill,  
I have been a viper in a lake;  
I have been a star, crooked at first,  
The heft of a knife, or a spear in battle.  
Clearly shall I prophesy

Of battle where smoke comes drifting.  
Five battalions of lads will dance on my knife.  
Six yellow horses - the best of the breed  
Better than any is my cream-coloured steed,  
Swift as a sea-mew along the shore.  
I myself am a power in battle,  
A cause of blood from a hundred chieftains.  
Crimson is my shield, gold my shield-rim.  
Only Geronwy, from the dales of Edrywy,  
Is better than I.

Long and white are my fingers.  
Since I was a shepherd,  
Since I was learned,  
I have traveled the world;  
I have made my circuit,  
I have dwelled in a hundred islands,  
In a hundred caers.  
O wise and proficient druids  
Do you prophesy of Arthur

Or is it I you celebrate?  
I know what is to be  
You what has been;  
I know the saga of the flood,  
Christ's crucifixion,  
The day of doom.  
Golden, Jeweled,  
I shall be richly bedecked  
Luxury shall attend me  
Because of Virgil's (or 'the Ffyrllt's') prophecy.

## Leadership

Be not too wise, not too foolish,  
be not too conceited, nor too diffident,  
be not too haughty, nor too humble,  
be not too talkative, nor too silent  
be not too hard, nor too feeble.  
for:  
If you be too wise, one will expect too much of you;  
if you be too foolish, you will be deceived;  
if you be too conceited, you will be thought vexatious;  
if you be too humble, you will be without honor;  
if you be too talkative, you will not be heeded;  
if you be too silent, you will not be regarded;  
if you be too hard, you will be broken;  
if you be too feeble, you will be crushed.

"It is through these habits," adds Cormac,  
"That the young become old and kingly warriors."

## Sunshine through the Window

Pleasant to me is the glittering of the sun today upon these  
margins, because it flickers so.  
*Irish; marginal note by an unknown Irish scribe; 9th century*

## Further Readings

An excellent book to continue your readings is *A Celtic Miscellany* collected by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson which is available in the Penguin Classics section. It has a great many selections of ancient Irish and Welsh poems, stories and prayers.

# The Thirteen Fold Mystery Section

Editor's Note: Both OBOD and the RDNA use the following poem by Amergin, as he tries to dispel the Druidic wind that is keeping his Milesian fleet of boats off the shore of Ireland. Translators of Old Irish take great liberty with it, and so each rendering is different in the imagery of its inherent shamanistic qualities. Therefore I'll give many versions, so choose the version you wish. It is from the "Book of Invasions," one of the major Irish mythological cycles. In the RDNA, we call this passage, The Thirteen Fold Mystery.

## Amergin's Song

(Found in *Book of Druidry*, pg. 289)

I am a wind on the wave,  
I am a wave of the ocean,  
I am the roar of the sea,  
I am a powerful ox,  
I am a hawk on a cliff,  
I am a dewdrop in the sunshine,  
I am a boar for valor,  
I am a salmon in pools,  
I am a lake in a plain,  
I am the strength of art,  
I am a spear with spoils that wages battle,  
I am a man that shapes fire for a head.  
Who clears the stone-place of the mountain?  
What the place in which the setting of the gun lies?  
Who has sought peace without fear seven times?  
Who names the waterfalls?  
Who brings his cattle from the house of Tethra?  
What person, what god,  
Forms weapons in a fort?  
In a fort that nourishes satirists,  
Chants a petition, divides the Ogam letters,  
Separates a fleet, has sung praises?  
A wise satirist.

## Amergin's Song

(from "Taliesin" by Edward Williams)

At once, the wind dropped and the sea became flat calm. The Milesians sailed on and despite some losses, landed finally at Inber Colptha. There Amergin, the Druid, spoke this rhapsody:  
I am the wind upon the sea,  
I am a wave upon the ocean,  
I am the sound of the sea,  
I am a stag of seven points,  
I am a bull of seven fights,  
I am a bull a cliff,  
I am a hawk upon a cliff,  
I am a teardrop of the sun,  
I am the fairest of blossoms,  
I am a boar of boldness,  
I am a salmon in a pool,  
I am a lake on a plain,  
I am a word of skill,  
I am a battle-waging spear of spoil,  
I am a God who fashions fire in the mind.  
Who but I knows the secrets of the stone door?  
Who has seven times sought the Places of Peace?

Who, save I, knows the ages of the moon,  
 The place and time the sun sets?  
 Who calls the kine from Tethra's house,  
 And sees them dance in the bright heavens?  
 Who shapes weapons in a fort of glass,  
 In a fort that harbors satirists?  
 Who put the poet, the singer of praises,  
 Who but I divides the Ogam letters,  
 Separates combatants, approaches the Faery mound?  
 I, who am a wind upon the sea.

Based on the original Irish, and on the translations of Macalister,  
 Hull & Cross and Slover 170, 130.

## The Song of Amergin I

(As arranged by Robert Graves)

Year of 13 Months

Dec 24-Jan 21

Jan 22-Feb 18

Feb 19-Mar 18

Mar 19-Apr 15

Apr 16-May 13

May 14-June 10

June 11-July 8

July 9-Aug 5

Aug 6-Sept 2

Sept 3-Sept 30

Oct 1-Oct 28

Oct 29-Nov 25

Nov 26-Dec 22

Dec 23 ?

God is speaking

I am a stag of seven tines.

I am a wide flood on a plain

I am a wind on the deep waters

I am a shining tear of the sun.

I am a hawk on a cliff.

I am a fair amongst flowers

I am a god who sets the head afire with smoke

I am a battle waging spear

I am a salmon in a pool

I am a hill of poetry

I am a ruthless boar

I am a great noise from the sea.

I am a wave of the sea

Who but I knows the secret of the unhewn dolmen?

## Tree Alphabet

Beith the Birch

Luis the Rowan

Nuinn the Ash

Fearn the Alder

Saille the Willow

Huath the Hawthorn

Duir the Oak

Teinn the Holly

Coll the Hazel

Muinn the Vine

Gort the Ivy

Ngetal the Reed

Ruis the Elder tree

- Irish-Gaelic Poetic Wisdom (*Book of Druidry*, pg. 89)

## Spirit

I am the Wind that blows over the sea,

I am the Wave of the Ocean;

I am the Murmur of the billows;

I am the Ox of the Seven Combats;

I am the vulture upon the rock;

I am a Ray of the Sun;

I am the fairest of Plants;

I am a Wild Boar in valour;

I am a Salmon in the Water;

I am a Lake in the plain;

I am the Craft of the artificer;

I am a Word of Science;

I am the Spear-point that gives battle;'

I am the god that creates in the head of man the fire of thought.

# The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal

(pg. 589 of *Taliesin* by Edward Williams, 1848)

*Editor's Note: The following extensive poem from the Irish(?) is about a young prince who journeys by boat into the land of faeries. Islands were considered somewhat magical by the Celtic peoples. References to the afterlife can be found in the descriptions of what faeries do to pass the time. It's really long, but good.*

'Twas fifty quatrains that the woman from unknown lands sang on the floor of the house to Bran son of Febal, when the royal house was full of kings, who knew not whence the woman had come, since the ramparts were closed.

This is the beginning of the story. One day, in the neighborhood, of his stronghold, Bran went about alone, when he heard music behind him. As often as he looked back, 'twas still behind him the music was. At last he fell asleep at the music, such was its sweetness. When he awoke from his asleep, he saw close by him a branch of silver with white blossoms, nor was it easy to distinguish its bloom from the branch. Then Bran took the branch in his hand to his royal house. When the hosts were in the royal house, they saw a woman in strange raiment therein. 'Twas then she sang the fifty quatrains to Bran, while the host heard her, and all beheld the woman. And she said:

A branch of the apple-tree from Emne  
I bring, like those one knows;  
Twigs of white silver are on it,  
Crystal brows with blossoms.

There is a distant isle,  
Around which sea-horses glisten:  
A fair course against the white-swelling surge,  
Four pillars uphold it.

A delight of the eyes, a glorious range,  
Is the plain on which the hosts hold games:  
Coracle contends against chariot  
In the southern Plain of White Silver.

Pillars of white bronze under it  
Glittering through beautiful ages.  
Lovely land throughout the world's age,  
On which the many blossoms drop.

An ancient tree there is with blossoms,  
On which birds call the canonical Hours.  
'Tis in harmony it is their wont  
To call together every Hour.

Splendors of every color glisten  
Throughout the gentle-voiced plains.  
Joy is known, ranked around music,  
In southern White-Silver Plain.

Unknown is wailing or treachery  
In the familiar cultivated land,  
There is nothing rough or harsh,  
But sweet music striking on the ear.

Without grief, without sorrow, without death,  
Without any sickness, without debility,

That is the sign of Emne  
Uncommon is an equal marvel.

A beauty of a wondrous land,  
Whose aspects are lovely,  
Whose view is a fair country,  
Incomparable is its haze.

Then if Silvery Land is seen,  
On which dragon stones and crystals drop,  
The sea washes the wave against the land,  
Hair of crystal drops from its mane.

Wealth, treasures of every hue,  
Are in Ciuin, a beauty of freshness,  
Listening to sweet music,  
Drinking the best of wine.

Golden chariots in Mag Rein,  
Rising with the tide to the sun,  
Chariots of silver in Mag Mon,  
And of bronze without blemish.

Yellow golden steeds are on the sward there  
Other steeds with crimson hue  
Others with wool upon their backs  
Of the hue of heaven all-blue.

At sunrise there will come  
A fair man illumining level lands;  
He rides upon the fair sea-washed plain,  
He stirs the ocean till it is blood.

A host will come across the clear sea,  
To the land they show their rowing;  
Then they row to the conspicuous stone,  
From which arise a hundred strains.

It sings a strain unto the host  
Through long ages, it is not sad,  
its music swells with chorus of hundreds  
They look for neither decay nor death.

Many-shaped Emne by the sea,  
Whether it be near, whether it be far,  
In which are many thousands of variegated women,  
Which the clear Sea encircles.

If he has heard the voice of the music,  
The chorus of the little birds from Imchiunn,  
A small band of women will come from a height  
To the plain of sport in which he is.

There will come happiness with health  
To the land against which laughter peals,  
Into Imchiuin at every season  
Will come everlasting joy.

It is a day of lasting weather  
That showers silver on the lands,  
A pure-white cliff on the range of the sea,  
Which from the sun receives its heat.

The host race along Mag Mon,  
A beautiful game, not feeble,  
In the variegated land over a mass of beauty.  
They look for neither decay nor death.

Listening to music at night,  
And going into Ildathach,  
A variegated land, splendor on a diadem of beauty,  
Whence the white cloud glistens.

There are thrice fifty distant isles  
In the ocean to the west of us;  
Larger than Erin twice  
Is each of them, or thrice.

A great birth will come after ages,  
That will not be in a lofty place,  
The son of a woman whose mate will not be known,  
He will seize the rule of the many thousands.

A rule without beginning, without end,  
He has created the world so that it is perfect,  
Whose are earth and sea,  
Woe to him that shall be under His unwill

'Tis He that made the heavens,  
Happy he that has a white heart,  
He will purify hosts under pure water,  
'Tis He that will heal your sickness.

Not to all of you is my speech given,  
Though its great marvel has been heard:  
Let you, Bran, only hear from among this crowd  
What of wisdom has been told to him.

Do not fall on a bed of sloth,  
Let not thy intoxication overcome thee;  
Begin a voyage across the clear sea,  
If perchance thou mayst reach the land of women.

Thereupon the woman went from them, while they knew  
not whither she went. And she took her branch with her. The  
branch sprang from Bran's hand into the hand of the woman, nor  
was there strength in Bran's hand to hold the branch.

Then on the morrow Bran went upon the sea. The number  
of his men was three companies of nine. One of his foster-  
brothers and shield mates was set over each of the three  
companies of nine. When he had been at sea two days and two  
nights, he saw a man in a chariot coming towards him over the  
sea. That man also sang thirty other quatrains to him, and made  
himself known to him, and said that he was; Manannan son of  
Lir, and said that it was upon him to go to Ireland after long ages,  
and that a son would be born to him, Mongan son of Fiachnath  
was the name which would be upon him. So Manannan sang  
these thirty quatrains to Bran:

Bran deems it a marvelous beauty  
In his coracle across the clear sea:  
While to me in my chariot from afar  
It is a flowery plain on which he rows about.

That which is a clear sea  
For the prowed skiff in which Bran is,  
That is a happy plain with profusion of flowers  
To me from the chariot of two wheels.

Bran sees  
The number of waves beating across the clear sea:  
I myself see in Mag Mon  
Rosy-colored flowers without fault.

Sea-horses glisten in summer  
As far as Bran has stretched his glance:  
Rivers pour forth a stream of honey  
In the land of Manannan son of Lir.

The sheen of the main, on which thou art,  
The white hue of the sea, on which thou rowest,  
Yellow and azure are spread out,  
It is land, and is not rough.

Speckled salmon leap from the womb  
Of the white sea, on which thou lookest:  
They are calves, they are colored lambs  
With friendliness, without mutual slaughter.

Though but one chariot-rider is seen  
In Mag Mell of many flowers,  
There are many steeds on its surface,  
Though them thou seest not.

The size of the plain, the number of the host,  
Colors glisten with pure glory,  
A fair stream of silver, cloths of gold,  
Afford a welcome with all abundance.

A beautiful game, most delightful,  
They play sitting at the luxurious wine,  
Men and gentle women under a bush,  
Without sin, without crime.

Along the top of a wood has swum  
Thy coracle across ridges,  
There is a wood of beautiful fruit  
Under the prow of thy little boat.

A wood with blossom and fruit,  
On which is the vine's veritable fragrance,  
A wood without decay, without defect,  
On which are leaves of golden hue.

We are from the beginning of creation  
Without old age, without consummation of earth,  
Hence we expect not that there should be frailty;  
Sin has not come to us.

An evil day when the Serpent went  
To the father to his city!  
She has perverted the times in this world,  
So that there came decay which was not original

By greed and lust he has slain us,  
Through which he has ruined his noble race:  
The withered body has gone to the fold of torment,  
And everlasting abode of torture.

It is a law of pride in this world  
To believe in the creatures, to forget God,  
Overthrow by diseases, and old age,  
Destruction of the soul through deception.

A noble salvation win come  
From the King who has created us,  
A white law will come over seas;  
Besides being God, He will be man.

This shape, he on whom thou lookest

Will come to thy parts;  
'Tis mine to journey to her house,  
To the woman in Moylinny.,

For it is Manannan son of Lir,  
From the chariot in the shape of a man;  
Of his progeny will be a very short while  
A fair man in a body of white clay.

Manannan the descendent of Lir will be  
A vigorous bed-fellow to Caintigern:  
He shall be called to his son in the beautiful world,  
Fiachna will acknowledge him as his son.

He will delight the company of every fairy-mound,  
He will be the darling of every goodly land,  
He will make known secrete-a course of wisdom  
In the world, without being feared.

He will be in the shape of every beast,  
Both on the azure sea and on land,  
He will be a dragon before hosts at the onset,  
He will be a wolf in every great forest.

He will be a stag with horns of silver  
In the land where chariots are driven,  
He will be a speckled salmon in a full pool,  
He will be a seal, he win be a fair-white swan.

He will be throughout long ages  
A hundred years in fair kingship,  
He will cut down battalion,a lasting grave  
He will redden fields, a wheel around the track.

It will be about kings with a champion  
That he will be known as a valiant hero,  
Into the strongholds of a land on a height  
I shall send an appointed end from Islay.

High shall I place him with princes,  
He will be overcome by a son of error;  
Manannan the son of Lir  
Will be his father, his tutor.

He will behis time will be short  
Fifty years in this world:  
A dragon-stone from the sea will kill him  
In the fight at Senlabor.

He will ask a drink from Loch Lo,  
While he looks at the stream of blood;  
The white host will take him under a wheel of clouds  
To the gathering where them is no sorrow.

Steadily then let Bran row,  
Not far to the Land of Women,  
Emne with many hues of hospitality  
Thou wilt reach before the setting of the sun.

Thereupon Bran went from Manannan mac Lir. And he saw an island. He rowed round about it, and a large host was gaping and laughing. They were all looking at Bran and his people, but would not stay to converse with them. They continued to give forth gusts of laughter at them. Bran sent one of his people on the island. He ranged himself with the others, and was gaping at them like the other men of the island. Bran

kept rowing round about the island. Whenever his man came past Bran, his comrades would address him. But he would not converse with them, but would mostly look at them and gape at them. The name of this island is the Island of Joy. Thereupon they left him there.

It was not long thereafter when they reached the Land of Women. They saw the leader of the women at the port. Said the chief of the women: "Come hither on land, O Bran son of Febal! Welcome is thy coming!" Bran did not venture to go on Shore. The woman threw a ball of thread to Bran straight over his face. Bran put his hand on the ball, which adhered to his palm. The thread of the ball was in the woman's hand, and she pulled the coracle towards the port. Thereupon they went into a large house, in which was a bed for every couple, even thrice nine beds. The food that was put on every dish vanished not from them. It seemed a year to them that they were thereit chanced to be many years. No savor was wanting to them. Home-sickness seized each one of them, even Nechtan son of Collbran. Bran's kindred kept praying him that he should go to Erin with them. The woman said to them their going would make them rue.

However, they went, and the woman said that none of them should touch the land, and that they should visit and take with them the man whom they had left in the Island of Joy.

Then they went until they arrived at a gathering at Srub Brain on the coast of Erin. The men asked of them who it was came over the Erin. Said Bran: "I am Bran the son of Febal." One of the men said: "We do not know such a one, though the 'Voyage of Bran' is in our ancient stories."

One of Bran's men sprang from them out of the coracle. As soon as he touched the earth of Ireland, forthwith he was a heap of ashes, as though he had been in the earth for many hundred years. 'Twas then that Bran sang this quatrain:

For Collbran's son great was the folly  
To lift his hand at age,  
Without any one casting a wave of pure water  
Over Nechtan, Collbran's son.

Thereupon, to the people of the gathering Bran told all his wanderings from the beginning until that time. And he wrote these quatrains in ogam, and then bade them farewell. And from that hour his wanderings are not known.

# Wisdom of the Modern Gaels

The Gaelic peoples of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man have always been known for their wits and wisdom, although not always carried out in practice. The following proverbs are taken from two collections: *Irish Proverbs and Sayings: Gems of Irish Wisdom* by Padraic O'Farrell from Mercier Press in Dublin Ireland 1980 and *Scottish Proverbs* by Lang Syne Publishers Ltd. of Newtongrange, Midlothian 1980. While they are sort of short for a meditational reading, they are good for solitary reading.

## Advice

It's no use giving good advice unless you have the wisdom to go with it.

Neither give cherries to pigs nor advice to a fool.

Good advice often comes from a fool.

It is foolish to scorn advice but more foolish to take all advice.

Don't throw away the dirty water until you are sure you have clean water.

If you have to give advice to lovers find out what they want first and advise them to do that.

The ambitious man is seldom at peace.

A gentle answer quells the anger.

Don't go to the goat's shed if it's wool you're seeking.

There's no point in keeping a dog if you are going to do your own barking.

## Attitudes

The best way to get an Irishman to refuse to do something is by ordering it.

Bigots and begrudgers will never bid the past farewell.

The man with the broken ankle is most conscious of his legs.

Hating a man doesn't hurt him half as much as ignoring him.

All men praise their native country.

Initiative is praiseworthy when it succeeds, stupid when it fails.

A cynic is "... a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." -Wilde

Titles distinguish the mediocre, embarrass the superior and are disgraced by the inferior. -Shaw

Morality is simply the attitude we adopt towards people whom we personally dislike. -Wilde

There is no satisfaction in hanging a man who does not object to it. -Shaw

Say what you will, an ill mind will turn it to ill.

## Behaviour

Keep a blind eye when you're in another man's corner.

The more you step on the dunghill, the more dirt you'll get in.

Don't bless with the tip of your tongue if there's bile at the butt.

Here's to absent friends and here's twice to absent enemies.

## Company

If you lie down with dogs you'll rise with fleas

The loneliest man is the man who is lonely in a crowd.

Talk to yourself rather than to bad companions.

If you want to be with the company you'll call it good company

Don't keep company with your betters. You won't like them and they won't like you.

There's no war as bitter as a war between friends.

The best way to make friends is to meet often. The best way to keep them is to meet seldom.

Choose your friend among the wise, and your wife among the virtuous.

Friendship multiplies our joys, and divides our grief.

Hearts may agree, though heads differ.

## Contentment

Enough is as good as plenty.

Be happy with what you have and you'll have plenty to be happy about.

The far hills may be greener, but the hill you climb on the way to work is less steep.

The slow horse reaches the mill.

Night never yet failed to fall.

If you rush the cook the spuds will be hard.

The apple won't fall till it is ripe.

A pund o' care winna pay an ounce o' debt.

## Death

Death looks the old in the face and lurks behind the youths.

Dead men tell not tales, but there's many a thing learned in a wake house.

There are more lies told in a wake-room than in a court-room.

Death is deaf, and will hear nae denial.

## Education and Experience

A knowledgeable man frowns more often than a simpleton.

No use having the book without the learning.

You won't learn to swim on the kitchen floor.

A wise man doesn't know his master's mistakes.

Learning is a light burden.

Sense bought by experience is better than two senses learned by book.

Don't start to educate a nation's children until its adults are learned.

A scholar's ink lasts longer than a martyr's blood.

The school house bell sounds bitter in youth and sweet in age.

An experienced rider doesn't change his horse in midstream.

An old broom knows the dirty corners best.

The wearer knows best where the boot pinches.

An old dog sleeps near the fire but he'll not burn himself.

The lesson learned by a tragedy is a lesson never forgotten.

A family of Irish birth will argue and fight, but let a shout come from without and see them all unite.

## Fate

If you're born to be hanged, you'll never be drowned.

No matter how long the day, night must fall.

Who's drowned in the storm is to be mourned for, after the storm has calmed.

An oak is often split by a wedge from its branch.

Never miss the water till the well runs dry.

We learn in suffering what we teach in song.

Flee as fast as you will, your fortune will be at your tail.

## Fighting

He who faces disaster bravely can face his maker.

If you're the only one that knows you're afraid, you're brave.

One brave man forms a majority.

Courage against misfortune, and reason against passion.

Better to come in at the end of a feast than at the beginning of a fight.

The quarrelsome man is lucky. Everybody has to put up with him except himself.

If we fought temptation the way we fight each other we'd be a nation of saints again.

Better bear the palm than face the fist.

An Irishman is seldom at peace unless he is fighting.

The first blow is half the battle. -Goldsmith

This contest is one of endurance and it is not they that can inflict the most, but they who can suffer the most who will conquer. - Terence MacSwiney.

Anger begins wi' folly, and ends wi' repentance.

Anger's mair hurtfu' than the wrang that caused it

He that will be angry for ony thing, will be angry for naething.

When drums beat, law is silent.

Muscles won't bend a strong man's will.

The strong man may when he wishes; the weak man may when he can.

It's not the strongest who live longest.

The man with the strongest character is attacked most often.

## Foolishness

There's no fool like an old fool.

Correct your own mistakes from those made by fools.

A man may speak like a wise man, and act like a fool.

## God and Heaven

God gave us two ears and one mouth and we should use them in the same proportion.

God is good but don't dance in a canoe.

God's help is closer than the door.

Prayers from a black heart are like thunder from a black sky, neither are wanted by God nor man.

The road to Heaven is well signposted but badly lit at night.

Forsake not God till you find a better master.

A good life is the only religion

A good example is the best sermon.

A good conscience is the best divinity.

## Greed

Every man is born clean, clever and greedy. Most of them stay greedy.

The greedy man stores all but friendship.

Dispensing charity is the only advantage in amassing a fortune.

A mean act is long felt.

If you lend your coat don't cut off the buttons.

There's little difference between a closed hand and a fist.

It's easy to sleep on your neighbour's misfortune.

Charity begins at home, but shouldna end there.

## Hope

"I hope to" is a weak man's way of refusing.

He who has never hoped can never despair.

There's nothing that trouble hates facing as much as a smile.

## Humor

A sense of humor is not a burden to carry yet it makes heavy loads lighter.

One man with humour will keep ten men working.

Humour, to a man, is like a feather pillow. It is filled with what is easy to get but gives great comfort.

When a thing is funny, search it for a hidden truth. -Shaw

## Hypocrisy and Integrity

The bigger the patch, the bigger the hole.

The man that hugs the altar-rails does not always hug his own wife.

Before you shake the right hand of an enemy make sure he's not left handed.

It's harder to become honest than it is to become rich.

When an Irishman talks of "principle" he is a danger to everybody. -O'Connor

Those who make the laws are often their greatest breakers.

Greatness in a man knows modesty.

Bribe the rogue and you needn't fear the honest man.

Man can climb the highest summits, but he cannot dwell there long. -Shaw

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. -Shaw

## Love

If you live in my heart, you live rent-free.

A flicker that warms is better than a blaze that burns.

Love is like sun to a flourit invigorates the strong but wilts the weak.

## Nature

It costs nothing to see nature's great non-stop show.

It takes every blade of grass to make the meadow green.

## Politics

The politician is a man who can find a problem in every solution.

An ambassador is a politician who can do less harm away from home.

The successful political leader can divide the national cake so that everybody thinks he's getting a slice.

There's nothing like a few shots to change the fanatic into a non-partisan.

A patriotic politician will always lay down your life for his country.

A political party is the madness of the many for the gain of a few. -Swift

## Pride

You cannot soothe the proud.

Pride is the author of every sin.

Pride never stops growing until it's ready to challenge God.

The gentry's pride prevents their seeing the beauty of humility.

He that winna be counseled canna be helped.

## Tact and Talk

A diplomat must always think twice before he says nothing.

Never talk about a rope in the house of a hanged man.

A tactful word is better than a pound in the hand.

Never talk about the blow that's not yet struck.

Tact is clever humility.

If you say everything you want to say, you'll hear something you don't want to hear.

A kind word never got a man in trouble.

Whisper into your cup when ill is spoken.

You can easily win an argument if you start off by being right.

Leave the bad news where you found it.

Every man is wise till he speaks.

You need not praise the Irish language simply speak it. -Pearse

There are two types of theater critic. One thinks he's God Almighty, the other is sure of it.

A gossip speaks ill o' a', and a' o' her.

## Wisdom

A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.

Taking the second thoughts means taking the first steps to wisdom.

A questioning man is half way to begin wise.

The wisest words ever written were the ten commandments. The most foolish words were written by those who ignored them.

The wisest man sees the least, says the least, but prays the most.

A word to the wise is enough.

A small leak will sink a great ship.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

Truth has a gude face but raggit claes.

Truth will aye stand without a prop.

A wise man wavers, a fool is fixed.

He's wise that can mak a friend o' a fae.

The first step to virtue is to love it in another.

Commonsense has its feet planted in the past.

On an unknown path it is better to be slow.

A blind man should not be sent to buy paint.

It's no use carrying an umbrella if your shoes are leaking.

In spite of the fox's cunning, many a woman wears its skin.

The clever man discovers things about himself and says them about others.

The incompetent talk, the competent walk.

## Work

It's better to like what you do than to do what you like.

The willing horse is always loaded.

Well begun is half done.

Many hands make light work.

It's not a delay to stop and sharpen the scythe.

Work hard, work long and have nothing to worry about, but in doing so don't become the boss or you'll have everything to worry about.

Work is the refuge of people who have nothing better to do.

Perseverance performs greater works than strength.

## Wisdom of the Native Americans

From a collection of sayings entitled *Native American Wisdom* by Kent Nerburn & Louise Mengelkoch, published in the Classic Wisdom series by New World Library 1991.

### Born Natural

I was born in Nature's wide domain! The trees were all that sheltered my infant limbs, the blue heavens all that covered me. I am one of Nature's children. I have always admired her. She shall be my glory: her features, her robes, and the wreath about her brow, the seasons, her stately oaks, and the evergreen, her hair, ringlets over the earth, all contribute to my enduring love of her.

And whenever I see her, emotions of pleasure roll in my breast, and swell and burst like waves on the shores of the ocean, in prayer and praise to Him who has placed me in her hand. It is thought great to be born in palaces, surrounded by wealth, but to be born in Nature's wide domain is greater still!

I would much more glory in this birthplace, with the broad canopy of heaven above me, and the giant arms of the forest trees for my shelter, than to be born in palaces or marble, studded with pillars of gold! Nature will be Nature still, while palaces shall decay and fall in ruins.

Yes, Niagara will be Niagara a thousand years hence! The rainbow, a wreath over her brow, shall continue as long as the sun, and the flowing of the river while the work of art, however carefully protected and preserved, shall fade and crumble into dust!

-George Copway (Kahgegahbowh) Ojibwe

### Sacred Earth

The character of the Indian's emotion left little room in his heart for antagonism toward his fellow creatures... For the Lakota, mountains, lakes, rivers, springs, valleys, and woods were all finished beauty. Winds, rain, snow, sunshine, day, night, and change of seasons were endlessly fascinating. Birds, insects, and animals filled the world with knowledge that defied the comprehension of man.

The Lakota was a true naturalist, a lover of Nature. He loved the earth and all things of the earth, and the attachment grew with age. The old people came literally to love the soil and they sat or reclined on the ground with a feeling of being close to a mothering power.

It was good for the skin to touch the earth, and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with bare feet on the sacred earth.

Their tipis were built upon the earth and their altars were made of earth. The birds that flew in the air came to rest upon the earth, and it was the final abiding place of all things that lived and grew. The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing.

That is why the old Indian still sits upon the earth instead of propping himself up and away from its life-giving forces. For him, to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and to feel more keenly; he can see more clearly into the

mysteries of life and come closer in kinship to other lives about him.

-Chief Luther Standing Bear Teton Sioux

## Silent Vigils

In my opinion, it was chiefly owing to their deep contemplation in their silent retreats in the days of youth that the old Indian orators acquired the habit of carefully arranging their thoughts.

They listened to the warbling of birds and noted the grandeur and the beauties of the forest. The majestic clouds, which appear like mountains of granite floating in the air, the golden tints of a summer evening sky, and all the changes of nature, possessed a mysterious significance.

All this combined to furnish ample matter for reflection to the contemplating youth.

-Francis Assikinack (Blackbird) Ottawa

## Simple Truth

I believe much trouble and blood would be saved if we opened our hearts more. I will tell you in my way how the Indian sees things. The white man has more words to tell you how they look to him, but it does not require many words to speak the truth.

-Chief Joseph Nez Perce

## Courtesy

Children were taught that true politeness was to be defined in actions rather than in words. They were never allowed to pass between the fire and an older person or a visitor, to speak while others were speaking, or to make fun of a crippled or disfigured person. If a child thoughtlessly tried to do so, a parent, in a quiet voice, immediately set him right.

Expressions such as "excuse me," "pardon me," and "so sorry," now so often lightly and unnecessarily used, are not in the Lakota language. If one chance to injure or cause inconvenience to another, the word wanunhecun, or "mistake," was spoken. This was sufficient to indicate that no discourtesy was intended and that what had happened was accidental.

Our young people, raised under the old rules of courtesy, never indulged in the present habit of talking incessantly and all at the same time. To do so would have been not only impolite, but foolish; for poise, so much admired as a social grace, could not be accompanied by restlessness. Pauses were acknowledged gracefully and did not cause lack of ease or embarrassment.

In talking to children, the old Lakota would place a hand on the ground and explain: "We sit in the lap of our Mother. From her we, and all other living things, come. We shall soon pass, but the place where we now rest will last forever." So we, too, learned to sit or lie on the ground and become conscious of life about us in its multitude of forms.

Sometimes we boys would sit motionless and watch the swallows, the tiny ants, or perhaps some small animal at its work and ponder its industry and ingenuity; or we lay on our backs and looked long at the sky, and when the stars came out made shapes from the various groups.

Everything was possessed of personality, only differing from us in form. Knowledge was inherent in all things. The world was a library and its books were the stones, leaves, grass, brooks, and the birds and animals that shared, alike with us, the storms and blessings of earth. We learned to do what only the student of nature ever learns, and that was to feel beauty. We never railed at the storms, the furious winds, and the biting frosts and snows. To do so intensified human futility, so whatever came we adjusted ourselves, by more effort and energy if necessary, but without complaint.

Even the lightning did us no harm, whenever it came too close, mothers and grandmothers in every tipi put cedar leaves in the coals and their magic kept danger away. Bright days and dark days were both expressions of the Great Mystery, and the Indian reveled in being close to the Great Holiness.

Observation was certain to have its rewards. Interest, wonder, admiration grew, and the fact was appreciated that life was more than mere human manifestation; it was expressed in a multitude of forms.

This appreciation enriched Lakota existence. Life was vivid and pulsing; nothing was casual and commonplace. The Indian lived in every sense of the word, from his first to his last breath.

-Chief Luther Standing Bear Teton Sioux

## Conversation

Praise, flattery, exaggerated manners, and fine, high sounding words were no part of Lakota politeness. Excessive manners were put down as insincere, and the constant talker was considered rude and thoughtless. Conversation was never begun at once, or in a hurried manner.

No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation.

-Chief Luther Standing Bear Teton Sioux

## Persistence

When you begin a great work you can't expect to finish it all at once; therefore do you and your brothers press on, and let nothing discourage you until you have entirely finished what you have begun.

Now, Brother, as for me, I assure you I will press on, and the contrary winds may blow strong in my face, yet I will go forward and never turn back, and continue to press forward until I have finished, and I would have you do the same.

Though you may hear the birds singing on this side and that side, you must not take notice of that, but hear me when I speak to you, and take it to heart, for you may always depend that what I say shall be true.

-Teedyuscung Delaware

## Crowned Leadership

We now crown you with the sacred emblem of the deer's antlers, the emblem of your Lordship. You shall now become a mentor of the people of the Five Nations. The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans- which is to say that you shall be filled

with peace and goodwill and your mind filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the confederacy.

With endless patience you shall carry out your duty, and your firmness shall be tempered with tenderness for your people. Neither anger nor fury shall lodge in your mind, and all your words and actions shall be marked with calm deliberation.

In all your deliberations in the Council, in your efforts at lawmaking, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not away the warnings of any others, if they should chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law, which is just and right.

Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the earth, the unborn of the future Nation.

-Constitution of the Five Nations

## Pine Tree Chiefs

Should any man of the Nation assist with special ability or show great interest in the affairs of the Nation, if he proves himself wise, honest, and worthy of confidence, the Confederate Lords may elect him to a seat with them and he may sit in the Confederate Council. He shall be proclaimed a Pine Tree sprung up for the Nation and be installed as such at the next assembly for the installation of Lords.

Should he ever do anything contrary to the rules of the Great Peace, he may not be deposed from office, no one shall cut him down- but thereafter everyone shall be deaf to his voice and his advice. Should he resign his seat and title, no one shall prevent him. A Pine Tree Chief has no authority to name a successor, nor is his title hereditary.

-Constitution to the Five Nations

## Not by Bread Alone

My friends, how desperately do we need to be loved and to love. When Christ said that man does not live by bread alone, he spoke of a hunger. This hunger was not the hunger of the body. It was not the hunger for bread. He spoke of a hunger that begins deep down in the very depths of our being. He spoke of a need as vital as breath. He spoke of our hunger for love.

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. We turn inward and begin to feed upon our own personalities, and little by little we destroy ourselves.

With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.

-Chief Dan George

## Show Me

Brother! We are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while, and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does

them good and makes them honest and less disposed to cheat us, we will then consider again becoming Christians.

-Red Jacket Seneca

## Free Wisdom

We have men among us, like the whites, who pretend to know the right path, but will not consent to show it without pay! I have no faith in their paths, but believe that every man must make his own path!

-Black Hawk Sauk

## Quarreling about God

We do not want churches because they will teach us to quarrel about God, as the Catholics and Protestants do. We do not want to learn that.

We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth. But we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that.

-Chief Joseph Nez Perce

## God Made Me This Way

I am of the opinion that so far as we have reason, we have a right to use it in determining what is right or wrong, and we should pursue the path we believe to be right.

If the Great and Good Spirit wished us to believe and do as the whites, he could easily change our opinions, so that we would see, and think, and act as they do. We are nothing compared to His power, and we feel and know it.

-Black Hawk, Sauk

## Pausing

Whenever, in the course of the daily hunt, the hunter comes upon a scene that is strikingly beautiful, or sublime, a black thundercloud with the rainbow's glowing arch above the mountain, a white waterfall in the heart of a green gorge, a vast prairie tinged with the blood-red of the sunset, he pauses for an instant in the attitude of worship.

He sees no need for setting apart one day in seven as a holy day, because to him all days are God's days.

-Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), Santee Sioux

## Please Listen

Grandfather, Great Spirit, once more behold me on earth and lean to hear my feeble voice. You lived first, and you are older than all needs, older than all prayers. All things belong to you, the two legged, the four legged, the wings of the air, and all green things that live.

You have set the powers of the four quarters of the earth to cross each other. You have made me cross the good road, and the road of difficulties, and where they cross, the place is holy. Day in, day out, forevermore, you are the life of things.

-Black Elk Oglala Sioux

## The Views of Two Men

Nothing the Great Mystery placed in the land of the Indian pleased the white man, and nothing escaped his transforming hand. Wherever forest has not been mowed down, wherever the animal is recessed in their quiet protection, wherever the earth is not bereft of four-footed life; that to him is an "unbroken wilderness."

But, because for the Lakota there was no wilderness, because nature was not dangerous but hospitable, not forbidding but friendly, Lakota philosophy was healthy, free from fear and dogmatism. And here I find the great distinction between the faith of the Indian and the white man. Indian faith sought the harmony of man with his surroundings; the other sought the dominance of surroundings.

In sharing, in loving, all and everything, one people naturally found a due portion of the thing they sought, while in fearing, the other found need of conquest.

For one man the world was full of beauty; for the other it was a place of sin and ugliness to be endured until he went to another world, there to become a creature of wings, half-man and half-bird.

Forever one man directed his Mystery to change the world He had made; forever this man pleaded with Him to chastise his wicked ones; and forever he implored his God to send His light to earth. Small wonder this man could not understand the other.

But the old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart, away from nature, becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things, soon led to lack of respect for humans, too. So he kept his children close to nature's softening influence.

-Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux

## Misfortune

Do not grieve. Misfortunes will happen to the wisest and best of men. Death will come, always out of season. It is the command of the Great Spirit, and all nations and people must obey. What is past and what cannot be prevented should not be grieved for. . . Misfortunes do not flourish particularly in our life. They grow everywhere.

-Big Elk Omaha Chief

## Pretty Pebbles

As a child, I understood how to give; I have forgotten that grace since I became civilized. I lived the natural life, whereas I now live the artificial. Any pretty pebble was valuable to me then, every growing tree an object of reverence.

Now I worship with the white man before a painted landscape whose value is estimated in dollars! Thus the Indian is reconstructed, as the natural rocks are ground to powder and made into artificial blocks that may be built into the walls of modern society.

-Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), Santee Sioux

## The Power of Paper

Many of the white man's ways are past our understanding. . . They put a great store upon writing; there is always a paper.

The white people must think paper has some mysterious power to help them in the world. The Indian needs no writings; words that are true sink deep into his heart, where they remain. He never forgets them. On the other hand, if the white man loses his papers he is helpless.

I once heard one of their preachers say that no white man was admitted to heaven unless there were writings about him in a great book!

-Four Guns, Oglala Sioux

## Frantic Fools

The English, in general, are a noble, generous minded people, free to act and free to think. They very much pride themselves on their civil and religious privilege; on their learning, generosity, manufacturing, and commerce; and they think that no other nation is equal to them.

No nation, I think, can be more fond of novelties than the English; they gaze upon foreigners as if they had just dropped down from the moon...

They are truly industrious, and in general very honest and upright. But their close attention to business produces, I think, too much worldly mindedness, and hence they forget to think enough about their souls and their God.

Their motto seems to be "Money, money, get money, get rich, and be a gentleman." With this sentiment, they fly about in every direction, like a swarm of bees, in search of the treasure that lies so near their hearts.

-Peter Jones, or Kahkewaquonaby  
("Sacred Waving Feathers"), Ojibwe

## Cities

The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities, no place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insects' wings. Perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand, but the clatter only seems to insult the ears.

The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, the smell of the wind itself cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with pine. The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath, the animals, the trees, the man.

Like a man who has been dying for many days, a man in your city is numb to the stench.

-Chief Seattle, Suquamish and Duwamish

## The White Man's Dreams

A few more hours, a few more winters, and none of the children of the great tribes that once lived on this earth, or that roamed in small bands in the woods, will be left to mourn the graves of a people once as powerful and hopeful as yours.

The whites, too, shall pass sooner than other tribes. Continue to contaminate your own bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

When the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses all tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires, where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone.

And what is it to say farewell to the swift and the hunt, to the end of living and the beginning of survival? We might understand if we knew what it was that the white man dreams, what he describes to his children on the long winter nights, what visions he burns into their minds, so they will wish for tomorrow. But we are savages. The white man's dreams are hidden from us.

-Chief Seattle, Suqwanish and Duwamish

## The Vigil

by Lame Deer at Willow, at Rosebud, South Dakota, 1967, recorded by Erdoes.

Editor's Note: The following story is from *Myths and Legends of the American Indian* by Boez and Endroes (available on Open Reserve) describes what can go wrong on an all night vigil, one like the RDNA do in preparation for entering the 3rd Order.

The vision quest is a tradition among the Plains people. A man or woman seeking the way and the road of life, or trying to find the answer to a personal problem, may go on a vision quest for knowledge and enlightenment. This means staying on top of a hill or inside a vision pit, alone, without food or water, for as long as four days and nights. It is said, that if the quiet voices reveal or confer a vision that shapes a person's life, then the quest is worth all the suffering. The following tale, however, treats the vision quest with less than complete solemnity, with Sioux man Lame Deer's characteristic quirks.

A young man wanted to go on a lumbasa, or vision quest, thinking that would give him the stuff to be a great medicine man. Having a high opinion of himself, he felt sure that he had been created to become great among his people and that the only thing lacking was a vision.

The young man was daring and brave, eager to go up to the mountain top. He had been brought up by good, honest people who were raised in the ancient ways and who prayed for him. All through the night they were busy getting him ready, feeding him wasna, corn, and lots of good meat to make him strong. At every meal they set aside everything for the spirits so that they would help him to get a great vision.

His relatives thought he had the power even before he went up there. That was putting the cart before the horse, or rather the travois before the horse, as this is an Indian legend.

When at last he started on his quest, it was a beautiful morning in late spring. The grass was up, the leaves were out, nature was at its best.

Two medicine men accompanied him. They put up a sweatlodge to purify him in the hot, white breath of the sacred steam. They smoked him with the incense of sweet grass,

rubbing his body with salve of bear grease. Around his neck they hung it with an eagle's wing. They went to the hilltop with him to the vision pit and make an offering of tobacco bundles.

They told the young man to cry, to humble himself, to ask for holiness, to cry for power, for a sign from the Great Spirit, for a gift which would make him into a medicine man. After they had done all they could, they left him there.

He spent the first night in the hole the medicine men had dug for him, trembling and crying out loudly. Fear kept him awake, yet he was cocky, ready to wrestle with the spirits for the vision, the power that he wanted. But no dreams came to ease his mind. Toward morning light, the sun came up, he heard a voice in the swirling white mists of day.

Speaking from no particular direction, as if it came from different places it said: "See here, young man, there are other spots you could have picked; 'there are other hills around here. Why don't you go there and cry for a dream? You disturbed us all night, all us creatures, animals and birds; you even kept the trees awake. We couldn't sleep. Why should you cry here? You're a brash young man, not yet ready or worthy to receive a vision."

But the young man clenched his teeth, determined to stick it through. He resolved to force that vision to come. He spent another day in the pit, begging for enlightenment, which would not come, and then another night of fear and cold and hunger.

The young man cried out in terror. He was paralyzed with fear, unable to move. The boulder dwarfed everything in view; it towered over him, he stared open-mouthed, but as it came to crush him, it stopped. Then, as the young man stared, his hair standing up, his eyes starting out of his head, the boulder ROLLED UP THE MOUNTAIN, all the way to the top. He could hardly believe what he saw.

He was still cowering motionless when he heard the roar and ramble again and saw that immense boulder coming down at him once more. This time he managed to jump out of his vision pit at the last moment. The boulder crushed it, obliterated it, grinding the young man's peace pipe and gourd rattle into dust.

Again the boulder rolled up the mountain, and again it came down. "I'm leaving, I'm leaving!" hollered the young man. Regaining his power of motion, he scrambled down the hill as fast as he could. This time the boulder actually leapfrogged over him, bouncing down the slope, crushing and pulverizing everything in its way. He ran unseeingly, stumbling, falling, getting up again. He did not even notice the boulder rolling up once more and coming down for the fourth time. On this last and most fearful descent, it flew through the air in a giant leap, landing right in front of him and embedding itself so deeply in the earth that only its top was visible. The ground shook itself like a wet dog coming out of a stream and flung the young man this way and that.

Gaunt, bruised, and shaken, he stumbled back to his village. To the medicine men he said: "I have received no vision and gained no knowledge." He returned to the pit, and when dawn arrived once more, he heard the voice again: "Stop disturbing us; go away!" The same thing happened on the third morning. By this time he was faint with hunger, thirst, and anxiety. Even the air seemed to oppress him, to fight him. He was panting. His stomach felt shriveled up, shrunk tight against his backbone. But he was determined to endure one more night, the fourth and last. Surely the vision would come. But again he cried for it out of the dark and loneliness until he was hoarse, and still he had no dream. Just before daybreak he heard the same voice again, very angry: "why still here?" He knew then that he had suffered in vain.

He now knew he would have to go back to his people and confess that he had gained no knowledge and no power. The only thing he could tell them was that he got bawled out every morning. Sad and cross, he replied "I can't help myself this is MY last day, and I'm crying my eyes out. I know you told me to go home, but who are you to give me orders? I don't know you. I'm going to stay until my uncles come to fetch me, whether you like it or not.!"

All at once there was a rumble from a larger mountain that shook the hill. It became a mighty roar, and the whole hill trembled. The wind started to blow. The young man looked up and saw a boulder poised on the mountain's summit. He saw lightning hit it, saw it sway. Slowly the boulder moved. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, it came tumbling down the mountain side, churning up the earth, snapping huge trees as if they were little twigs. And the boulder WAS COMING RIGHT DOWN ON HIM!

He barely made it back to the village and talked to his uncles. "I have made the spirits angry. It was all for nothing."

"Well you did find out one thing," said the older of the two, who was his uncle. "You went after your vision like a hunter after buffalo, or a warrior after scalps. You were fighting the spirits. You thought they owed you a vision. Suffering alone brings no vision nor does courage, nor does sheer will power. A vision, comes as a gift born of humility, of wisdom, and of patience. If from your vision quest you have learned nothing else, you have already learned much. Think about it."

# Wisdom of the Africans

Source: These proverbs are from the Akan people of Ghana and were collected from the book; *Speak to the Winds, Proverbs from Africa* by Kofi Asare Opoku, Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, New York 1975.

## Proverbs on Wisdom

A fool's walking stick helps the wise person to stand.

Wisdom is not like money, which should be kept in a safe.

If you are greedy in conversation, you lose the wisdom of your friends.

The wise person who does not learn ceases to be wise.

All knowledge is acquired by learning.

It is through other people's wisdom that we learn wisdom ourselves; a single person's understanding does not amount to anything.

One must come out of one's house to begin learning.

## Proverbs on Truth and Falsehood

If you travel with fraud, you may reach your destination but will be unable to return.

Whereas a liar takes a thousand years to go on a journey, the one who speaks the truth follows and overtakes the liar in a day.

## Proverbs on Human Conduct

If you see wrongdoing or evil and say nothing against it, you become its victim.

One who refuses to obey cannot command.

The saying is, "Visit a foreign country and respect its citizens," and not "Visit a foreign country and act better than its citizens."

If you build a poor wooden bridge across the river, it never seems to rot until you have to cross it yourself.

It is easier to put out the fire in the house of neighbors than to deal with the smoke in one's own house.

## Proverbs on Virtue

When virtue founds a town, the town grows and lasts long.

Goodness is hidden, but eventually appears.

The seed of goodness is as difficult to sow as it is hard to uproot the plant.

## Proverbs on Cooperation and Contentment

When the right hand washes the left and the left hand washes the right, then both hands will be clean.

Good fellowship is sharing good things with friends.

The string can be useful until a rope can be found.

## Proverbs on Opportunity

The one who asks the way does not get lost.

One does not throw the stick after the snake has gone.

## Proverbs on Human Beings

Lack of companionship is worse than poverty.

May death not kill the person who tortures us, may the gods protect the one who ill-treats us; however long it takes our destiny to give us victory.

## Proverbs on Nature

If you want to speak to God, speak to the winds.

If the mouse were the size of a cow, it would be the cat's slave nevertheless.

If plain water were satisfying enough, then fish would not take the hook.

However poor the crocodile becomes, it hunts in the river, not in the forest.

## Proverbs on Leadership

People count what they are refused, not what they are given.

The ears of the leader are like a strainer; there are more than a thousand openings to them.

Power must be handled in the manner of holding an egg in the hand: if you hold it too firmly it breaks; if you hold it too loosely it drops.

The hen knows when it is dawn but she leaves the crowing to the cock.

# More Wisdom of the African World

Editor's Note: These quotes were taken from *Wisdom of the African World* edited by Reginald McKnight and published by the Classic Wisdom series of the New World Library.

Even the most incorrigible maverick has to be born somewhere. He may leave the group that produced him, he may be forced to but nothing will efface his origins, the marks of which he carries with him everywhere. -James Baldwin

The various cultures of people of color often seem very attractive to white people. (Yes, we are wonderful, we can't deny it.) But white people should not make a playground out of other people's cultures. We are not quaint. We are not exotic. We are not cool. -Amoco Three Rivers

Europeans created and popularized the image of Africa as a jungle, a wild place where people were cannibals, naked and savage in a countryside overrun with dangerous animals. Such an image of the Africans was so hateful to Afro-Americans that they refused to identify with Africa. We did not realize that in hating Africa and the Africans we were hating ourselves. You cannot hate the roots of a tree and not hate the tree itself. -Malcolm X

Honor a child and it will honor you. -Ila

Grown people know that they do not always know the why of things, and even if they think they know, they do not know where and how they got the proof. Hence the irritation they show when the children keep on demanding to know if a thing is so and how the grown folks got the proof of it. It is so troublesome ... to the pigeonhole way of life. -Zora Neale Houston

A child that asks questions isn't stupid. -Ewe

Eve we old people must learn, and recognize that the things people know today were not born with us. No, knowledge is not a hereditary thing. -Sembene Ousmane

A cynical young person is almost the saddest sight to see, because it means that he or she has gone from knowing nothing to believing in nothing. -Maya Angelou

It takes a whole village to raise a single child. -Yoruba

If you see an old man running, either he is chasing something or something is chasing him. -Nupe

If with the right hand you flog the child, with your left hand draw her unto your breast. -Yoruba

You need not tell a child that there is a god. - Nzima

Not where I was born, but where it goes well with me is my home. - Kanuri

Love is the understanding that all people are bound together in guilt and only individuals are capable of achieving personal salvation. The duty of every sensitive individual is to see to it that conditions are created in which he and others like him can become the majority. Lewis Nixon.

No friendship, except after enmity. -Egypt

Whoever loves thee, even a dog, thou wilt also love. -Tsonga

It is preferable to change the world on the basis of love of mankind. But if that quality be too rare, then commonsense seems to be the next best thing. -Bessie Head

Make friends when you no need them. -Jamaica

He who pulls a branch brings the leaves with it. -Ila

There's a time when you have to explain to your children why they're born, and it's a marvelous thing if you know the reason by then. -Hazel Scott

A person can run for years but sooner or later he has to take a stand in the place which, for better or worse, he calls home, do what he can to change things there. -Paule Marshall

If you wish to be blamed, marry; if you wish to be praised, die. -Galla

Before you marry, keep both eyes open; after you marry, shut one. -Jamaica

Tell me whom you love, I'll tell you who you are. -Creole

God created us so that we should form the human family, existing together because we were made for one another. We are not made for an exclusive self-sufficiency but for interdependence, and we break the law of being at our peril. -Desmond Tutu

God made the sea, we make the ship; He made the wind, we make the sail; He made the calm, we make oars. -Swahili

Every society is really governed by hidden laws, by unspoken but profound assumptions on the part of the people, and ours is no exception. It is up to the American writer to find out what these laws and assumptions are. -James Baldwin

People wish to be poets more than they wish to write poetry and that's a mistake. One should wish to celebrate more than one wishes to be celebrated. -Lucille Clifton

The artistic innovator is perhaps our society's most valuable citizen. He or she does not so much change the world, as change how we view it. They are ambassadors of peace and advocates of understanding. They melt our differences into the common ground of the dance floor, the theater, the concert hall, and a million living rooms across the nation. That is why it is important that we so diligently search for them. -Ossie Davis.

I have a great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift. -Septima Poinsette Clark

There is no beauty but in relationships. Nothing cut off by itself is beautiful. Never can things in destructive relationships be beautiful. All beauty is in the creative purpose of our relationships; all ugliness is in the destructive aims of the destroyer's arrangements. -Ayi Kwei Armah

Back of the problem of race and color lies a greater problem which both obscures and implements it; and that is the fact that so many civilized persons are willing to live in comfort even if the price of this is poverty, ignorance and disease of the majority of their fellowmen; that to maintain this privilege men have waged war until today war tends to become universal and continuous, and the excuse for this war continues largely to be color and race. -W.E.B. DuBois

Fright is worse than a blow. -Morocco

Nonviolent passive resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its efficacy is at an end. For me,

non-violence was not a moral principle but a strategy; there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon. -Nelson Mandela

We will either find a way or make one. -Hannibal

The knife does not know its owner. -Ndaou

Racism is easy to see, hard to prove, impossible to deny. -Anonymous

The man who goes ahead stumbles so that the man who follows may have his wits about him. -Bondei

When two elephants struggle it is the grass that suffers. -Swahili

Mediocrity is safe. -Nikki Giovanni

An elephant does not die of one broken rib. -Tsonga

The lion which kills is not one that roars. -Xhosa

A man dies before we appreciate him. -Jabo

Always being in a hurry doesn't hinder death, neither does going slowly hinder living. -Swahili

Because it rained the day the egg was hatched the foolish chicken swore he was a fish. -Wole Soyinka.

The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely. -Lorraine Hansberry

He who hopes fares better than he who wishes, and he who wishes fares better than he who despairs. -Morocco

What is a cynic but a romanticist turned sour? -Lewis Nkosi

When you have been bitten by a snake you flee from a worm. -Basa

Every man honest till the day they catch him. -Jamaica

A man is his words. -Kru

In the midst of your illness you will promise a goat, but when you recover, a chicken will seem sufficient. -Jukun

People do not wish to appear foolish; to avoid the appearance of foolishness, they were willing to remain actually fools. -Alice Walker

A fool is a treasure to the wise. -Botswana

When the fool does not succeed in bleaching ebony he then tries to blacken ivory. -Amharic

At the bottom of patience there is heaven. -Kamba

Never be afraid to sit awhile and think. -Lorraine Hansberry

The indolent person reckons religious fasting a labor. -Yoruba

I believe in the brotherhood of all men, but I don't believe in wasting brotherhood on any one who doesn't want to practice it with me. Brotherhood is a two-way street. I don't think brotherhood should be practiced with a man just because his skin is white. Brotherhood should hinge upon the deeds and attitudes of a man. -Malcolm X

There is no agony like learning an untold story inside you. -Zora Neale Hurston

Ancient things remain in the ears. -Oji

Never give up what you have seen for what you have heard. -Swahili

A good conversation is better than a good bed. -Galla

He who gives you the diameter of your knowledge, prescribes the circumference of your activities. -Minister Louis Farrakhan

That which is written is binding, but that which is spoken is forgotten. -Amharic

Suddenly, it has become popular to defend tribal people, their world view and their life ways. But while the West is engaged in a great debate about what it means to preserve culture, the indigenous world is aware that it has already lost the battle. It seems obvious to me that as soon as one culture begins to talk about "preservation" it means that it has already turned the other culture into an endangered species. -Malidoma Patrice Some

People are easier to kill if they come from nowhere. If they have no names, no fathers or mothers.... The dead piles of corpses are nobodies who began nowhere, go nowhere, except back where they belong. Nowhere. No count. Nothing. -John Edgar Wideman

You can live without anything you weren't born with, and you can make it through on even half of that. - Gloria Naylor

The monkey says there is nothing like poverty for taking the conceit out of a man. -Oji

Work is good provided you do not forget to live. -Bantu

The grumbler does not leave his job, but he discourages possible applicants. -Ganda

Wealth is like hair in the nose; if much is pulled out, it is painful, if little, it is painful. -Madagascar

Wealth, if you use it, comes to an end; learning, if you use it, increases. -Swahili

Everything will satisfy you except money; as much as you have, so much more you will want. -Morocco

The one-eyed man does not thank God till he see the blind man. -Toucouleur

As a leader... I have always endeavored to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion. Oftentimes, my own opinion will simply represent a consensus of what I heard in the discussion. I always remember the axiom: a leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind. -Nelson Mandela

Respect depends on reciprocity. -Nyang

Justice becomes injustice when it makes two wounds on a head which only deserves one. -Bakongo

A devotion to humanity is too easily equated with a devotion to a cause, and causes, as we know, are notoriously bloodthirsty. - James Baldwin

If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you at night. -Angela Davis

We decide our affairs, then rest them with God. -Jabo

I have walked the long road to freedom but I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended. - Nelson Mandela

Slowness comes from God and quickness from devil. -Morocco

To commit ten sins against God is better than to commit one sin against a servant of God. -Morocco

God gives and does not remind us continually of it; the world gives and constantly reminds us. -Nupe

Prayer needn't be long when faith is strong. - Jamaica

It is not our custom to fight for our gods... Let us not presume to do so now. If a man kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut, the matter is between him and the god. We did not see it. If we put ourselves between the god and his victim we may receive blows intended for the offender. When a man blasphemes, what do we do? Do we go and stop his mouth? No, we put our fingers into our ears to stop us hearing. That is a wise action. -Chinua Achebe

Every knot has an unraveler in God. -Egypt

Don't blame God for having created the tiger, but give him thanks for not having given the tiger wings. -Amharic

If you are going to ask from God, take a big receptacle. -Hausa

# Wisdom of the Hindus & Greeks

## Origin of the Fables of Aesop

These famous stories were taken from Schoken Book's 1966 reprint of the 1894 version translated by Joseph Jacobs. Although I will not give a full history of the origins of these fables. Most people think that the animal story developed independently in Greece and India between 1000 b.c.e and 500 b.c.e. The Greek origin reputedly began with Aesop, an Ethiopian slave in Samos Greece. The India origin began with Kasyapa, not long before Sakayamuni (the Buddha). The Buddhists quickly adopted the animal tale and began to pass them onto the Greeks. I've chosen some example that I feel are particularly Druidical to me. Enjoy.

## The Frogs Desiring a King

The Frogs were living as happy as could be in a marshy swamp that just suited them; they went splashing about caring for nobody and nobody troubling with them. But some of them thought that this was not right, that they should have a king and a proper constitution, so they determined to send up a petition to Jove to give them what they wanted. "Mighty Jove," they cried, "send unto us a king that will rule over us and keep us in order." Jove laughed at their croaking, and threw down into the swamp a huge Log, which came down -kerplash!- into the swamp.

The Frogs were frightened out of their lives by the commotion made in their midst, and all rushed to the bank to look at the horrible monster; but after a time, seeing that it did not move, one or two of the boldest of them ventured out towards the Log, and even dared to touch it; still it did no move. Then the greatest hero of the Frogs jumped upon the Log and commenced dancing up and down upon it, thereupon all the Frogs came and did the same; and for some time the Frogs went about their business every day without taking the slightest notice of their new King Log lying in their midst. But this did not suit them, so they sent another petition to Jove, and said to him: "We want a real king; one that will really rule over us." Now this made Jove angry, so he sent among them a big Stork that soon set to work gobbling them all up. Then the Frogs repented when too late.

*Better no rule than cruel rule.*

## The Bat, the Birds and the Beasts

A great conflict was about to come off between the Birds and the Beasts. When the two armies were collected together the Bat hesitated which to join. The Birds that passed his perch said: "Come with us"; but he said: "I am a Beast." Later on, some Beasts who were passing underneath him looked up and said: "Come with us"; but he said: "I am a Bird." Luckily at the last moment, peace was made, and no battle took place, so the Bat came to the Birds and wished to join in the rejoicings, but they all turned against him and he had to fly away. He then went to the Beasts, but had soon to beat a retreat, or else they would have torn him to pieces. "Ah," said the Bat, "I see now that *he that is neither one thing nor the other has no friends.*"

## The Dog and the Wolf

A gaunt Wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a House-dog who was passing by. "Ah, Cousin," said the Dog, "I knew how it would be; your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why do you not work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?"

"I would have no objection," said the Wolf, "if I could only get a place."

"I will easily arrange that for you," said the Dog; "come with me to my master and you shall share my work."

So the Wolf and the Dog went towards the town together. On the way there the Wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the Dog's neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

"Oh, it is nothing," said the Dog. "That is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up; it chafes a bit, but one soon gets used to it."

"Is that all?" said the Wolf. "Then good-bye to you, Master Dog. *Better starve free than be a fat slave.*"

## The Fox and the Grapes

One hot summer's day a Fox was strolling through an orchard till he came to a bunch of Grapes just ripening on a vine which had been trained over a lofty branch. "Just the thing to quench my thirst," quoth he. Drawing back a few paces, he took a run and a jump, and just missed the bunch. Turning round again with a One, Two, Three, he jumped up, but with no greater success. Again and again he tried after the tempting morsel, but at last had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: "I am sure that they are sour."

*It is easy to despise what you cannot get.*

## The Lion and the Statue

A Man and a Lion were discussing the relative strength of men and lions in general. The Man contended that he and his fellows were stronger than lions by reason of their greater intelligence. "Come now with me," he cried, "and I will soon prove that I am right." So he took him into the public gardens and showed him a statue of Hercules overcoming the Lion and tearing his mouth in two.

"That is all very well," said the Lion, "but proves nothing, for it was a man who made the statue."

*We can easily represent things as we wish them to be.*

## The Man and His Two Wives

In the old days, when men were allowed to have many wives, a middle-aged Man had one wife that was old and one that was young; each loved him very much, and desired to see him like herself. Now the Man's hair was turning grey, which the young Wife did not like, as it made him look too old for her husband. So every night she used to comb his hair and pick out the white ones. But the elder Wife saw her husband growing grey with great pleasure, for she did not like to be mistaken for his mother. So every morning she used to arrange his hair and pick out as many of the black ones as she could. The consequence was the Man soon found himself entirely bald.

*Yield to all and you will soon have nothing to yield.*

## The Two Crabs

One fine day two Crabs came out from their home to take a stroll on the sand. "Child," said the mother, "you are walking very ungratefully. You should accustom yourself to walking straight forward without twisting from side to side."

"Pray, mother," said the young one, "do but set the example yourself, and I will follow you."

*Example is the best precept.*

## Hercules and the Waggoner

A Waggoner was once driving a heavy load along a very muddy way. At last he came to a part of the road where the wheels sank halfway into the mire, and the more the horses pulled, the deeper sank the wheels. So the Waggoner threw down his whip, and knelt down and prayed to Hercules the Strong. "O Hercules, help me in this my hour of distress," quoth he. But Hercules appeared to him and said:

"Tut, man, don't sprawl there. Get up and put your shoulder to the wheel." *The Gods help them that help themselves.*

## The Man and the Wooden God

In the old days men used to worship stocks and stones and idols, and prayed to them to give them luck. It happened that a Man had often prayed to a wooden idol he had received from his father, but his luck never seemed to change. He prayed and he prayed, but still he remained as unlucky as ever. One day in the greatest rage he went to the Wooden God, and with one blow swept it down from its pedestal. The idol broke in two, and what did he see? An immense number of coins flying all over the place.

## The Miser

Once upon a time there was a Miser who used to hide his gold at the foot of a tree in his garden; but every week he used to go and dig it up and gloat over his gains. A robber, who had noticed this, went and dug up the gold and decamped with it. When the Miser next came to gloat over his treasures, he found nothing but the empty hole. He tore his hair, and raised such an outcry that all the neighbours came around him, and he told them how he used to come and visit his gold. "Did you ever take any of it out?" asked one of them.

"Nay," said he, "I only came to look at it."

"Then come again and look at the hole," said a neighbour; "it will do you just as much good."

*Wealth unused might as well not exist.*

## The Bundle of Sticks

An old man on the point of death summoned his sons around him to give them some parting advice. He ordered his servants to bring in a bundle of sticks, and said to his eldest son: "Break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the Bundle. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful. "Untie the bundle," said the father, "and each of you take a stick." When they had done so, he called out to them: "Now, break," and each stick was easily broken. "You see my meaning," said the father.

*"Union gives strength."*

## The Buffoon and the Countryman

At a country fair there was a Buffoon who made all the people laugh by imitating the cries of various animals. He finished off by squeaking so like a pig that the spectators thought that he had a porker concealed about him. But a Countryman who stood by said: "Call that a pig's squeak! Nothing like it. You give me till tomorrow and I will show you what it's like." The audience laughed, but next day, sure enough, the Countryman appeared on the stage, and putting his head down squealed so hideously that the spectators hissed and threw stones at him to make him stop. "You fools!" he cried, "see what you have been hissing," and help up a little pig whose ears he had been pinching to make him utter the squeals.

*Men often applaud an imitation, and hiss the real thing.*

## The Serpent and the File

A Serpent in the course of its wanderings came into an armourer's shop. As he glided over the floor he felt his skin pricked by a file lying there. In a rage he turned round upon it and fired to dart his fangs into it; but he could do no harm to heavy iron and had soon to give over his wrath.

*It is useless attacking the insensible.*

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